




An Inconvenient Truth: We Are Eating Our Planet to Death Choosing a Plant-food Based Diet Is a Moral Issue

*This is the one newsletter I hope you will find
worth forwarding to everyone you know.*

 [e-mail to a friend](#)

Have you felt helpless as the earth warms? As followers of the McDougall Diet, we have the power to cause hard-fought changes that will slow global warming. And it is not too late. Our success hangs upon whether or not we can convince very large numbers of people to make the morally responsible decision to follow a plant-food based diet. You and I, who already live on oatmeal, pasta salads, and bean burritos, have had eating experiences which allow us to see the world differently. Our friends, family, and co-workers haven't a clue—they cannot imagine life without beefsteak, fried chicken, and cheese. So, the opportunity is ours to take.

According to the 2006 UN report, global production of meat and milk will more than double by 2050. We cannot let this happen. Our planet is already being devastated. Long-overdue changes based on the truth could halve livestock usage by 2015



To become prepared, there are two things I am asking you to do: First, watch Al Gore's documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, (now on DVD; Transcript: at <http://www.hokeg.dyndns.org/AITruth.htm>), and then read the introduction (at least) to the 2006 United Nations report, *Livestock's Long Shadow*. Armed with this information you will be able to make a real difference, beginning with the people closest to you. Our mission is to cause a dietary revolution; an uprising essential for cooling the planet.

"It means if there is something wrong, those who have the ability to take action, have the responsibility to take action."

Nicolas Cage
(2004)

From the movie, *National Treasure*, interpreting the meaning of this sentence from the Declaration of Independence, "But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security."

Global warming is the most serious challenge facing the human race. Al Gore's warnings in *An Inconvenient Truth* deserve your urgent attention—this is not another Y2K or Mad Cow scare—this is the real thing. "But how accurate are some of the scientific claims made in the documentary? In an attempt to clear the air, [National Geographic News](#) checked in with Eric Steig, an earth scientist at the University of Washington in Seattle, who saw *An Inconvenient Truth* at a preview screening. He says the documentary handles the science well. 'I was looking for errors,' he said. 'But nothing much struck me as overblown or wrong.'"

Buying a hybrid car and switching to energy efficient light bulbs are important, but these actions pale in

consequence compared to the effects we can get by causing planet-wide, dietary changes. ***Present levels of meat- and dairy-eating may become synonymous with death to our civilization.*** We stand on a precipice—the planet is ours to save.

Livestock's Long Shadow

According to a report, *Livestock's Long Shadow –Environmental Issues and Options*, released in November of 2006 from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, livestock* emerges as one of the top two or three most significant contributors to every one of the most serious environmental problems. (The release of this report was not covered by any of the major news outlets, only a few mentions are found on the Internet.)

*livestock refers to beef cattle, dairy cattle, chickens, pigs, and a few other animals domesticated for food uses.



[The UN Report](#)

The Following Are Some of the Findings from the UN Report:

Atmospheric Damage

Animal agriculture is responsible for 18 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions as measured in CO2 equivalents. By comparison, all transportation emits 13.5% of the CO2. In addition to CO2, environmentally toxic gases produced by livestock include nitrous oxide, methane, and ammonia generated from the animals' intestines—belching, flatulence, and manure. The report says "The impact is so severe that it needs to be addressed with urgency."

Livestock:

- ✓ Produces 65 percent of human-related nitrous oxide, which has 296 times the Global Warming Potential (GWP) of CO2.
- ✓ Accounts for 37 percent of all human-induced methane (which is 23 times as warming as CO2).
- ✓ Generates 64 percent of the ammonia, which contributes to acid rain and acidification of ecosystems.

Land Damage

- ✓ The total area occupied by grazing livestock is equivalent to 26 percent of the ice-free terrestrial surface of the planet. In addition, the total area dedicated to producing feed crops for these animals amounts to 33 percent of the total arable land.
- ✓ Clearing forests to create new pastures is a major source of deforestation, especially in Latin America where, for example, some 70 percent of former rainforests in the Amazon have been turned over to grazing. The forests are the major "sinks" for removing the greenhouse gases from the atmosphere—they are the "lungs of the Earth."

Water Damage

The livestock business is among the most serious users of the earth's increasingly scarce water resources; in addition, contributing to water pollution, excessive growth of organisms, depletion of oxygen, and the degeneration of coral reefs, among other things.

- ✓ The major water-polluting agents are animal wastes, antibiotics, hormones, chemicals from tanneries, fertilizers, and the pesticides used to spray feed crops.
- ✓ In the United States livestock is responsible for 55 percent of the erosion and sediment, 37 percent of the pesticide use, 50 percent of the antibiotic use, and a third of the load of nitrogen and phosphorus put into freshwater sources.
- ✓ Widespread overgrazing disturbs water cycles, reducing replenishment of above and below ground water resources. Significant amounts of water are withdrawn for the production of feed.

Species Loss

- ✓ Livestock's very presence in vast tracts of land and its demand for feed crops also contribute to loss of other plants and animals; livestock is identified as a culprit in 15 out of 24 important ecosystems that are assessed as in decline. The loss of species is estimated to be running 50 to 500 times higher than background rates found in the fossil record.

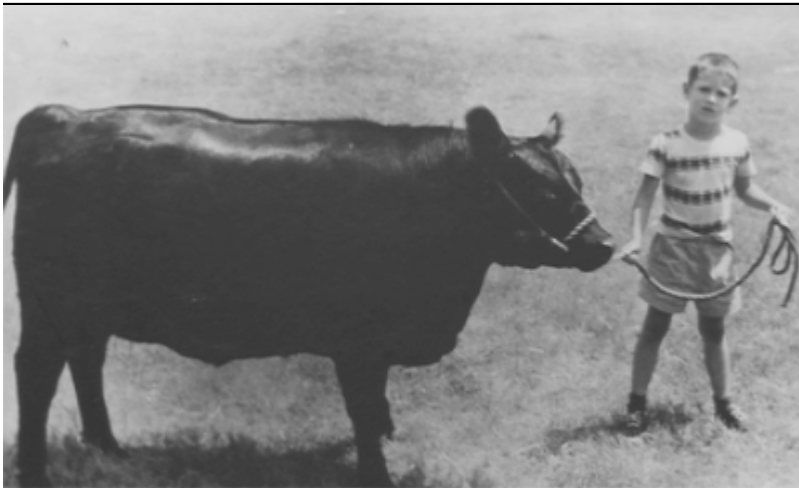
Is Change Realistic?

Al Gore wants us to switch to more efficient forms of transportation, not to give up our cars overnight. An enthusiastic campaign to reduce our dependency on livestock would not have as a primary goal making everyone become vegan (eliminating all animal foods); but more realistically, to cut the consumption of meat and dairy products—say, in half in 8 years. That could mean something as simple as asking people following the Western diet to consume on average two to three times more mashed potatoes (or other starchy vegetables) daily, instead of their usual animal-based foods—I believe this is not too much to request in order to save the earth!

Al Gore Does Not Discuss the Role of Food Animals

Not once during the 96 minute presentation, *An Inconvenient Truth*, did Al Gore mention animal foods as a cause of global warming or suggest any form of management of livestock as a solution. This oversight would be similar to not mentioning cigarette smoking in a discussion of lung cancer. With all due respect to Al Gore, I must speculate as to why he ignored this essential connection. Ignorance could not have been the reason. Catastrophic damage to our environment from livestock, especially cattle, has been recognized for decades. Nor do I believe his exclusion of this topic was for political correctness. His documentary is filled with unrestrained challenges to almost every segment of business and society. Al Gore is a brave and honest man, but he has human frailties, too.

Al Gore identified one reason for his leaving out the livestock connection in his documentary when he said, "You know more than a hundred years ago, Upton Sinclair wrote this: 'It's difficult to get a man to understand something if his salary depends on him not understanding it.'" Al Gore has been involved in the business of raising Black Angus cattle for most of his life. Today quite a few Angus breeders from around the country are among his closest friends.



**Young Al Gore with Black Angus
from the family farm**

In his "must see" documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, Al Gore failed to tell people that cows, pigs, sheep, and poultry are a far greater polluters of the planet earth than are all the cars, trains, and airplanes.



To explain the second source of his blindness to livestock's role in global warming, I offer one of my personal quotes, "People love to hear good news about their bad habits." With no intention to offend, I must point out that Al Gore's physical appearance reflects overindulgence in the Western diet—filled with meat, chicken, seafood, milk, and cheese. To speak plainly, he cannot see over his own dinner plate.

Al Gore is a giant, defending the truth. I am confident he will not let his personal life stand in the way of his mission—whether or not he himself changes to a plant-food based diet.

*Contact Al Gore about his oversight on the global impact of livestock:

The Office of the Honorable Al Gore
2100 West End Avenue
Suite 620
Nashville, TN 37203

Or call him at (615) 327-2227

No e-mail address for Al Gore

At <http://www.algore.com/> you can send a note through Al Gore to your representatives in congress. Ask them to help Americans give up their meat to save the world.

Does Global Warming Matter Enough?

For forty years I have believed people would rise up and take action once they realized that the vast majority of human sickness and suffering in developed countries is due to eating animal foods. The masses have remained quiet. For the past decade I have witnessed the growing epidemic of childhood obesity—a misery caused largely by the fast food giants. All this time I have waited for informed citizens to rise up in protest, or at the very least, to boycott the perpetrators of this child abuse. The sellers of easily procured beef burgers and milk shakes thrive uncontested by a single one of us.

Until now, inaction meant other people and their children became fat, sick and died prematurely—somehow, we have been able to live with those immoralities. The inconvenient truth is that most human beings find the destruction of fellow human beings, even little ones, acceptable. You can assume these same people will sit idly by and let the entire earth be destroyed. But we cannot let this happen, because this is our world, too. This time, failure to act means we and our children will be lost, along with those who do not seem to understand or care.

The Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. warned that "our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." Nothing matters more than solving global warming. Those of us—meaning you and I (experts or not)—who have the ability to take action, have the responsibility to take action.

Please Help with the Solution

Over the next month, during every spare moment, think about this crisis. (I have been able to think of little else myself recently.) Watch Al Gore's DVD, read the UN report, and Noam Mohr's article in this newsletter. If you have not done so already, stop (or reduce) eating meat, poultry, fish and dairy—ask your family and friends to do the same and tell them why. Mail your thoughts to me at drmcDougall@drmcDougall.com. Next month's (January 2007) newsletter will reflect our collective efforts for meaningful ways to move forward.

"Everything we need to do to save it (earth) is something we should be doing for other reasons anyway. We have everything we need already to start saving it with the possible exception of the will to act. But in the United States of America that is a renewable resource."

Al Gore's concluding remarks on the December 5, 2006 Oprah Winfrey show.